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EDTC 809 - Assignment 1

Observational Exercise

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Introduction

This research paper is centered around my observations of a high-performance Tennis class for kids between 8–10 years old at East Brunswick Racket Club on September 25, 2024 between 5:30 -7:00 pm on Court 3. This one and half hour class was with Coach Vanessa Canda who is also the Junior Tennis Director of the facility. I observed this class because I was interested in understanding how the coaching style and techniques of the coach engages the players and what strategies does the coach use to keep them focused and motivated. I was also interested in in gaining insights into how correction and feedback from the coach leads to improvement in the players' game.

Jottings

- Coach Vanessa welcomes the 4 players K, H, A and R and tells them to start warming up.
- Players take 3 laps around the court.
- As players get water, coach tells them the stretching exercises they were going to do and demonstrates them.
- Coach sets up cones and has the players do double- sided shuffle.
- Coach provides feedback and correct posture and techniques of players K and R.
- Both players K and R correct their posture based on feedback and follow through.
- Coach encourages all the players with supportive gestures and high- fives.
- Coach seamlessly guides them to lunges, fast feet and other warm up exercises while doing it with them.
- Coach ends the warming up session with "Awesome job, guys" remark and a water break.

- Coach divides the 4 players two groups. Players H and K in one group and Players A and R in the other group.
- Players get 7 shots each to hit the ball which was served by the coach from the opposite side of the court. The other team returns the shot and try to rally.
- Coach motivated the players by saying “Let’s get 8 shots in row without missing”.
- Players rally for next 10 minutes as each of the four players gets to hit 7 balls and turn them into rallies with their team.
- Coach gives direction (“ Look where you are aiming”, “rally again”, “let’s go cross court”) and encouragement (“very good”, “good job”).
- Service change. Coach tells the players that if they miss a rally before 3 shots they have to do 10 jumping jacks.
- Players groan but continue working. They do 10 sets of quick jumping jacks when someone misses a shot.
- Coach gives direction to player K as he hits the ball very hard, and it goes outside the court. “control your contact”, “control your height and depth”. Player K responds to coach with a thumbs -up sign.
- Players keep missing shots and have to do sets of 10 jumping jacks whenever they miss before 3 shots being played.
- Coach sets up strips and cones, players have to step on the strip and hop over the cones and hit the ball to the other side.
- Coach switches up the routines, changes positions of the cones.
- Coach individually critiques each player, correcting stance (how to place feet for volley), posture, and aim.

- Players respond by listening to the coach and making the necessary corrections.
- Clean up court. Players pick up balls with the ball caddies. Informal conversation and laughter ensues as they run around the court picking up balls.
- Once all the balls are picked up, practice resumes. Partners are switched. Its girls versus boys now.
- Coach starts with the rules of the game. The stakes are higher now. There are points for rallies won and whichever side misses before 5 shots will do 5 jumping jacks.
- Coach continues to praise and encourage both team when they win points. Praises player A for a “superb backhand”.
- Girls lose the game 6:5
- Coach changes up the game, if anyone hits a short ball successfully, their team will get 3 points instead of 1.
- Coach continues to praise even when player A misses a ball despite running hard
- Next game girls win by 7:10 points. Water break follows.
- Coach lays down cones again. Demonstrates serving motion in 6 steps. Repeats steps 1-6 in slow motion for the players to copy her each movement.
- . Coach corrects each player’s stance, hand positioning, placement of racket and motion individually. All players practice serve 20 times
- Players play for points during serve, 1 point of each ball that goes over the net within the lines.
- Player K hits the ball after coach tells him not and narrowly misses hitting another child. Coach assigns 20 burpees as punishment for not listening, disobeying and endangering another person.

- Players pick up balls, rest and take a water break.
- Another game starts. Same girls vs boys team.
- Girls serve first, lose the game. Coach tells them to move feet better.
- Coach praises boys for wining point. Cautions player K against hitting too hard. Encourages player R to move quicker when he misses a ball.
- Coach praises the girls for trying hard (“nice volley”, “nice return”, “good job”)
- Game goes on both team win games. They switch sides, switch serves and continue practicing.
- Play concludes with players “high fiving” with their rackets at the net and pick up ball and clean the court.

Pictures

Full Observational Notes

Date: September 25, 2024

Time: 5:30pm – 7:00pm

Location: Court 3, East Brunswick Racket Club

Description of the setting:

The East Brunswick Racket Club is a state-of-the-art tennis complex featuring multiple indoor courts, well-maintained surfaces, court viewing area, ample seating for parents and spectators, and full-service lockers rooms with shower areas. The coaches of the racket club also offers private lesson at Rutgers University, and it is the official indoor club of the Rutgers Tennis Team. The atmosphere is vibrant, with banners of Rutgers University players adorning the walls, creating a sense of inspiration and motivation. The facility includes a small pro shop and a comfortable kitchen/ lounge area with two vending machines for players to with team members before and after matches. The 7 courts are well-lit and expertly maintained. The lines are clear and the curtains surrounding the courts help dampen the tennis balls very well.

Participants observed:

- Coach Vanessa, Junior Tennis Director, age late 20's, providing expert guidance, coaching and motivation.
- Player K (boy, 8 years of age), energetic, athletic, tall (for his age), great tennis skills, powerful shot making, less control on shots because of force, tries to take away shots form teammates.

- Player R (boy, 9 years of age), good tennis skills, good shot making, misses shots as he runs slowly, plays well with teammates.
- Player A (girl, 9 years of age), quiet, great shot making ability, good runner, tries to chase down shots, plays well with teammates, tries to communicate with teammates.
- Player H (girl, 9 years of age), great tennis skills, quiet, shy, fair, tries to communicate with teammates and plays well with them.

Detailed Observation Notes

5:30 – 5:45 pm (arrival, warm up and stretching exercises)

The class headed by Coach Vanessa promptly begins at 5:30 pm on Court 3. Coach is on the court 5 minutes before the start of class and brings in all equipment (tennis balls, ball cart, cones, ball pick up caddies etc.). The class starts as the kids begin to arrive and the coach welcomes them with a brief instruction to start warm up. Coach Vanessa exhibits a dynamic and interactive coaching style. From the beginning of the session, she establishes a positive and energetic atmosphere. The children immediately start with 3 laps around the court. After a quick water break, the coach sets up cones at varying distances on the court and demonstrates the stretching exercises (lunges, double -sided shuffle and fast feet) as part of their stretching and warm up routine. She utilized a combination of direct instruction and demonstration as she corrects the stance of two players. The players respond by listening to the coach and correct their stance. Players continue their warm up routine and then take a water break.

5:45 – 5:55 pm (playing in teams, Players H and K vs Players A and R)

Practice commences after the water break. Players are divided into two teams. Coach Vanessa serves the ball to each player 7 times and they get to hit it across the court to the other team. The coach motivates them and provides engagement by saying “Let’s get 8 shots without missing.”

Coach provides direction and feedback and encouragement when players miss a shot. She switches up the practice with a service change and going cross court. Coach again motivated the players to not miss the shots by telling them that if they miss the ball before 3 rallies, they will all have to do 10 Jumping jacks. The players groan but this type of coaching style is familiar to them and keeps them engaged and motivated to do better. Coach Vanessa gives direction to player K as he hits the ball very hard, and it goes outside the court. She tells him to "control your contact", "control your height and depth". Player K responds to coach with a thumbs -up sign. Coach offers positive feedback when players rally for more than 6 shots. Players take a short water break and pick up balls.

6:00 – 6:10 pm (Practicing Volleying)

Coach switches up the routine after water break. She sets up strips and cones on the floor. She directs the players to step up to the strip (baseline) and hop over the cones as she serves the ball to them. Each players gets three balls to hit. Coach offers corrections and feedback to each child as to what to do and how to place their feet for volleying. Coach praises player H as she connects to particularly hard volley. After 5 minutes of practicing, coach asks players to clean up and lets them know they will play an actual game with points.

6:15 – 6:25 pm (Partners are switched and it is girls vs boys team)

Play starts after the clean-up with the girls team serving. The teams play for points and the stakes are higher now. Whichever teams miss the point before 5 shots has to do 5 Jumping Jacks. The players are excited and are trying their hardest to win points. Both teams play a superb game, trying to steal points from each other. Coach provides praise and encourages both team when they win points. Praises player A for a "superb backhand". Despite playing well, the girls lose the game 6:5. Once the game is done, the Coach changes up the game, if anyone hits a short ball

successfully, their team will get 3 points instead of one. Coach continues to praise even when player A misses a ball despite running hard. Girls win the second game by 7:10 points. Water break and clean up ensues.

6:30 – 6:40pm (Practicing to serve)

The coach lays down the cones again on the court. She directs the players to pay attention to her demonstration of serving the ball. As she serves, she breaks the motion into 6 steps and shows each step individually to the players. Coach repeats the steps slowly and stops at each step. Players model her foot and arm movement, and practice serve 20 times. Coach corrects each player's stance, hand positioning, placement of racket and motion individually. The players then play for points during serve, 1 point of each ball that goes over the net within the lines. Once each person has a chance, the coach tells everyone to stop serving and pick up the balls. Player K hits the ball after coach tells him not to and narrowly misses hitting another child. Coach assigns 20 burpees as punishment for not listening, disobeying and endangering another person.

6:45- 6:55 pm

Play resumes after picking up and another game starts. Same girls vs boys teams with the girls choosing to serve first. The girls lose the game, and the coach tells them to "move their feet better". Coach also praises boys for wining points. She also cautions player K against hitting too hard and encourages player R to move quicker when he misses a ball. Coach praises the girls for trying hard by saying "nice volley", "nice return", "good job". The game goes on, both team manage to win games. They switch sides, switch serves and continue practicing. Play concludes with players "high fiving" with their rackets at the net and pick up ball and clean the court.

Qualitative Research Questions

1.How does the coaching style of tennis instructors influence the engagement and motivation of high-performing young tennis players during training sessions?

This question aims to explore the relationship between a coach's style and the level of engagement and motivation among the young tennis players. By examining this question, researchers can analyze how specific coaching behaviors—such as the use of varied drills, encouragement, and competitive elements—affect the way players engage with the training process. Understanding this relationship could inform best practices in coaching and contribute to creating more effective training environments for young players.

2. In what ways does immediate feedback and correction from coaches impact the players game and improvs the skills of young tennis players?

This question focuses on the role of feedback in the learning process, specifically how immediate correction influences the acquisition of skills and improves the player's game. Researching this question would involve analyzing the effectiveness of various feedback methods—such as specificity, immediacy, and encouragement. Insights gained from this inquiry could lead to a better understanding of how feedback mechanisms contribute to the development of young players and how coaches can optimize their instructional strategies for maximum impact.

Analytic Section

Part 1: Coding

Jottings	Coding
Coach Vanessa welcomes the 4 players K, H, A and R and tells them to start warming up	Welcome, Atmosphere, Engagement
Players take 3 laps around the court.	Routine, Exercise

As players get water, coach tells them the stretching exercises they were going to do and demonstrates them.	Coaching style, Demonstration
Coach sets up cones and has the players do double- sided shuffle.	Coaching style, Engagement
Coach provides feedback and correct posture and techniques of players K and R.	Positive Feedback, Demonstration, Technique
Both players K and R correct their posture based on feedback and follow through.	Player response to Feedback
Coach encourages all the players with supportive gestures (clap, thumbs ups) and high- fives.	Encouragement, Motivation. Positive reinforcement
Coach seamlessly guides them to lunges, fast feet and other warm up exercises while doing it with them.	Demonstration, Technique
Coach ends the warming up session with "Awesome job, guys" remark and a water break.	Feedback, Motivation, positive reinforcement
Coach divides the 4 players two groups. Players H and K in one group and Players A and R in the other group.	Coaching style
Players get 7 shots each to hit the ball which was served by the coach from the opposite side of the court. The other team returns the shot and try to rally.	Coaching style, Technique
Coach motivated the players by saying "Let's get 8 shots in row without missing".	Motivation, Engagement
Players rally for next 10 minutes as each of the four players gets to hit 7 balls and turn them into rallies with their team.	Coaching Style
Coach gives direction (" Look where you are aiming", "rally again", "let's go cross court") and encouragement ("very good", "good job").	Feedback, Encouragement, positive reinforcement
Service change. Coach tells the players that if they miss a rally before 3 shots they have to do 10 jumping jacks.	Coaching style, Motivation, Engagement
Players groan but continue working. They do 10 sets of quick jumping jacks when someone misses the shot.	Player response, Coaching style.
Coach gives direction to player K as he hits the ball very hard, and it goes outside the court. "control your contact", "control your height and depth".	Feedback, Technique, Positive reinforcement
Player K responds to coach with a thumbs -up sign.	Player response
Players keep missing shots and have to do sets of 10 jumping jacks whenever they miss before 3 shots being played.	Engagement, Motivation
Coach sets up strips and cones, players have to step on the strip and hop over the cones and hit the ball to the other side.	Coaching style, Demonstration
Coach switches up the routines, changes positions of the cones.	Coaching style, Engagement
Coach individually critiques each player, correcting stance (how to place feet for volley), posture, and aim.	Feedback, Positive reinforcement

Players respond by listening to the coach and making the necessary corrections.	Player response to Feedback, Positive reinforcement
Once all the balls are picked up, practice resumes. Partners are switched. Its girls versus boys now.	Coaching style
Coach starts with the rules of the game. The stakes are higher now. There are points for rallies won and whichever side misses before 5 shots will do 5 jumping jacks.	Motivation, Engagement
Coach continues to praise and encourage both team when they win points. Praises player A for a superb backhand.	Encouragement, Motivation
Coach changes up the game, if anyone hits a short ball successfully, their team will get 3 points instead of one	Coaching style, Motivation, Encouragement, Engagement
Coach continues to praise even when player A misses a ball despite running hard	Encouragement
Coach lays down cones again. Demonstrates serving motion in 6 steps. Repeats steps 1-6 in slow motion for the players to copy her each movement.	Coaching style, Demonstration, Technique
All players practice serve 20 times. Coach corrects each player's stance, hand positioning, placement of racket and motion individually.	Demonstration, Feedback, Positive reinforcement
Players play for points during serve, 1 point of each ball that goes over the net within the lines.	Motivation, Engagement
Player K hits the ball after coach tells him not and narrowly misses hitting another child. Coach assigns 20 burpees as punishment for not listening, disobeying and endangering another person.	Coaching style, Feedback, Safety, Reprimand
Girls serve first, lose the game. Coach tells them to move feet better.	Encouragement
Coach praises boys for wining point. Cautions player K against hitting too hard. Encourages player R to move quicker when he misses a ball.	Encouragement, Motivation
Coach praises the girls for trying hard ("nice volley", "nice return", "good job")	Encouragement, Motivation
Game goes on both team win games. They switch sides, switch serves and continue practicing.	Coaching Style, Engagement

Part 2: Analysis and Interpretation of Findings

According to Creswell & Creswell (2023), qualitative observation is a valuable method for taking field notes on the behavior and activities of individuals at a research site. The researcher can record the notes in an unstructured or semi – structured way. These notes can be helpful in

exploring complex issues and gaining in-depth insights into the experiences and perceptions of participants. However, conducting qualitative research within a fast -paced tennis practice class posed distinct challenges. This is where the concept of "jottings," as described by Emerson et al., (2011) became helpful. Emerson et al., (2011) note that during active fieldwork, researchers frequently face dynamic and rapidly changing scenes, interactions, and events. By utilizing the practice of "jottings," researchers can enhance accuracy and capture minute details. Jottings involve creating brief written notes using keywords and phrases, enabling real-time documentation of significant moments. These jottings can serve as a valuable basis during the data analysis phase (Emerson et al., 2011).

In this observational exercise, a systematic coding method was utilized, consistent with the approach described by Emerson et al. (2011). The observational notes, including the jottings, were transcribed into a two-column chart. One side contained the complete observation notes, providing a detailed account of the events observed, while the other side systematically coded phrases and patterns within the data. This two - column format facilitated a structured analysis of the coaching style of the coach and its impact on the motivation and engagement of players and also, the impact of coach's feedback and correction on the player's game. By coding these phrases and patterns, it became possible to identify underlying themes related to coaching style, motivation, engagement, feedback and player responses.

Theme # 1 Impact of coaching style on player's motivation and engagement

Coach Vanessa employed a dynamic and interactive coaching style, which was a blend of authoritative guidance and supportive encouragement. She frequently included hands-on

demonstrations while explaining their importance. This dual method not only provided visual learning opportunities but also engaged the children's cognitive understanding of their movements. Coupled with positive reinforcement, these techniques appeared to enhance the players' focus and motivation throughout the session. The session also included a mix of drills, including footwork exercises, hand positioning, match play and teamwork. This variety maintained the children's interest and prevented monotony. The point systems employed by the coach and doing "Jumping Jacks" when missing shots had a substantial impact on the player's motivation and engagement. Additionally, she created mini competitions within drills, fostering a playful environment while enhancing motivation and engagement. During practice drills, she employed motivational phrases such as "Let's see you hit three in a row!" to instill a sense of competition. This friendly competition sparked enthusiasm and kept their energy levels high.

Theme # 2 Impact of feedback and correction on the player's game

The importance of correction and feedback in this training environment cannot be overstated. The coach fostered a positive environment where mistakes were seen as learning opportunities. This was evident during drills when a player missed a shot. Instead of focusing solely on the error, the coach would highlight what the player did correctly before providing constructive feedback. This technique reinforced the players' confidence, allowed them to correct their technique and improve their game. Corrections were provided promptly after a mistake and feedback was specific and focused on particular aspects of a player's performance. For instance, if a player's footwork was off during a drill, the coach would immediately address it, demonstrating the correct positioning and explaining its significance in executing a successful shot.

Conclusion

The observational exercise provided valuable insights into the impact of coaching style on players' motivation and engagement in the young high-performance tennis class. Coach Vanessa's engaging coaching style and effective techniques significantly contributed to the focus and motivation players. She created a rich learning environment for the young players by combining varied drills, positive reinforcement, and specific feedback. These techniques fostered an engaging environment where players felt both supported and challenged, leading to heightened motivation and engagement throughout the session.

Additionally, by providing immediate, constructive feedback and corrections, the coach facilitated meaningful improvements in the player's game. The coach's immediate and specific feedback allowed players to make real-time adjustments to their techniques, reinforcing learning and promoting improvement. By encouragement and providing constructive criticism, the coach not only enhanced the players' technical abilities but also built their confidence. Overall, the interplay between an engaging coaching style and effective feedback mechanisms significantly contributed to the players' growth and improvement.

References

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Emerson, R. M., Fretz, R. I., & Shaw, L. L. (2011). Writing Ethnographic Fieldnotes, Second Edition. University of Chicago Press.